

# **GAIN: THE BRIDGE TO INDEPENDENCE**

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## CHAPTER 600 - SELF-INITIATED PROGRAMS (SIP) - EDUCATION/TRAINING

### 610 OVERVIEW

An approvable SIP must be for an undergraduate degree or certificate program that leads to employment or a post-baccalaureate degree program for a California teaching credential in which a CalWORKs participant is enrolled prior to his/her GAIN orientation and appraisal appointment date.

### 611 KEY POINTS

- A participant in a SIP must be progressing satisfactorily, and fulfill the CalWORKs 32/35 hour weekly participation requirement.
- Two-parent (one or both) households may combine their work activity hours to meet the required 35 hours per week participation requirement.
- The 32/35 hour weekly requirement can be made up of a combination of classroom, laboratory, internship, and work study hours. If the hours of school participation do not add up to 32/35 hours per week, the participant must participate in other appropriate Welfare-to-Work (WtW) activities.
- A SIP that does not meet approval criteria can be continued only until the next semester or quarter break.
- Participation in all SIPs is to be documented in a WtW plan.
- The requirements of the WtW core activities ([see Section 912.32](#)) do not apply to SIP participation. SIP participants are:
  - Not required to participate 20 hours per week in core activities; and
  - Are not limited to 12 months of vocational education and training.

**Note:** A SIP can be approved for as long as a participant continues to receive cash aid and longer, in some cases, under the [Post-Time Limits](#) regulations.

- GAIN participants are notified 15 days prior to completion of their Self-Initiated Program (SIP) or post assessment activities via the GN 60102-a, GAIN Services Worker Appointment Letter.
- GAIN participants who are attending a Self-Initiated Program or a Vocational Education/Training activity are to be referred to a Bridging Activity during any school summer break. ([See Section 912.17.](#))

### 612 POLICY

#### .1 Appraisal

All CalWORKs participants are to attend a one-day appraisal, which begins with

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motivational training and orientation conducted by a contracted services provider, and concludes with a one-on-one appraisal interview with a GAIN Services Worker (GSW).

A participant in a SIP may be excused from motivational training and orientation when participant cannot miss school to attend the full-day motivational program. However, the GSW must stress the importance of attending the orientation/motivational training to provide the SIP participant with detailed information about the GAIN program flow, rights and responsibilities, and services provided through GAIN.

The GSW should discuss the participant's schedule and the ability to be flexible when attempting to reschedule the participant to attend motivational training. A participant should be encouraged to attend motivational training at the earliest opportunity during his/her day off when it falls on a week day.

The appraisal interview is mandatory. The GSW shall be flexible in the scheduling of the appraisal to accommodate the participant's schedule. During the appraisal interview, the GSW will provide an overview of the GAIN program and services, the participant's rights and responsibilities, participation options and the GAIN flow. The GSW will discuss the participant's SIP and establish if the participant has provided enough information to approve or deny it. SIP forms will be provided to the participant to be completed and/or returned by the educational/training provider by the due date specified on the form(s).

### **.2 SIP Criteria/Requirements**

#### **.21 Approval of SIP as WtW Activity**

.211 A SIP may be approved as a WtW activity when all of the following criteria are met:

- (a) The participant was enrolled on or before the date of appraisal, or on the date the individual would have been appraised if he/she had not failed, with good cause, to attend the appraisal appointment;
- (b) The program leads to an undergraduate degree or certificate, or a California regular teaching credential;

**Note: A participant who possesses a baccalaureate degree will not be eligible to participate in a SIP unless he/she is pursuing a California regular classroom teaching credential.**

- (c) The program is on the GN 6141, Los Angeles County's Listing of Approved Self-Initiated Programs Which Lead to Employment, GEARS Vocational Training Inventory, or the participant provides

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alternative documentation that the program will lead to employment; and

- (d) The participant is making satisfactory progress.

Study time is counted toward participation hours in a SIP activity if the participant receives educational credit and/or units that count toward the completion of his/her degree or certificate program, provided the study time also meets criteria (a) through (d) above.

Non-credit study time that can be documented also counts toward participation hours in a SIP activity.

### .22 Processing of SIP as WtW Activity

A participant identified during the appraisal interview as enrolled in a SIP is to complete the GN 6004, Self-Initiated Program Identification form. The form is used to obtain information from the participant to assist the GSW in evaluating and documenting the SIP disposition. Additionally, the GSW must give the participant a GN 6005, Verification of Self-Initiated Programs, to take to the educational/training provider to confirm the participant's SIP, determine the length of the program, hours of participation and so forth. The GN 6005 is to be completed by the service provider and returned to the GSW by the due date.

When the SIP is approved as a WtW activity, the participant and GSW complete and sign the WTW 1, Welfare-to-Work Plan and WTW 2, Welfare-to-Work Plan-Activity Assignment. The WTW 2 is to state that whenever the participant stops attending the SIP, refuses to attend regularly, or does not maintain satisfactory progress, or fails to meet the required hours of participation, without a good cause reason, the participant must be assigned to job search services.

### .23 Processing of Unapprovable SIP

.231 When the SIP is not approved as a WtW activity, the SIP is to be denied and the participant is to be processed as follows:

- (a) If the participant is progressing satisfactorily, he/she must be allowed to finish the current quarter or semester, and transfer to an approvable SIP at the end of the term.
- (b) If the participant is not progressing satisfactorily and/or fails/refuses to change to an approved SIP, he/she is to be assigned to Enhanced Job Club.

.232 A participant in a SIP not meeting SIP approval criteria must also sign the WTW 1 and WTW 2; however, the plan must specify that the:

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- (a) County has authorized continuation in the SIP only until the current semester or quarter ends and the participant agrees to transfer to a program that can be approved or he/she must participate in job search services; or
- (b) County has authorized continuation in the SIP only until the end of the current semester or quarter and the participant understands that he/she must participate in job search services at the end of the semester/quarter.

**Note:** At the appraisal interview, or when the participant provide sufficient documentation to enable the GSW to approve or deny his/her SIP, the GN 6146, Self-Initiated Program Notice of Action (NOA), must be given or mailed to the participant.

### .24 Alternative SIP Documentation

A program that is not on the GEARS vocational training inventory or the County-Approved SIP Listing may be approved as a SIP when the participant can provide documentation that the program will lead to employment. The GN 6093, Alternative Documentation that SIP Leads to Job Opportunities, provides examples of acceptable forms of documentation. The GN 6093 shall be given to the participant with an explanation of the process to demonstrate that a program not on the County list will lead to employment.

.241 Acceptable documentation may include the following:

- (a) A signed statement from an employer(s) who will offer the participant a job in that occupation upon completion of the program;
- (b) A list of at least three employers who have frequent openings in the occupation, at a skill level that can be achieved by the participant through the courses offered by the program; or
- (c) A statement from a service provider or an Employment Development Department (EDD) office identified the occupation as in demand in the local labor market.

### .25 SIP Hourly and Concurrent Participation Requirements

A participant in a one-parent household is required to participate in a WtW activity(s) for 32 hours per week. A participant in a two-parent household is required to participate 35 hours per week; however, the parents may combine their work activity hours to meet the 35 hours weekly requirement.

Concurrent participation in work activities is required when the weekly hours of participation do not total at least 32 hours for a one-parent household and

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35 hours for a two-parent household. Participants in a two-parent household may combine work activity hours to meet the 35 hours weekly participation requirement. SIP participation may be comprised of a combination of classroom time and course-related activities. Course-related activities are limited to laboratory, internship and work study hours that are directly linked to the participant's course of study.

When the participant's participation in his/her SIP does not meet the 32/35 hours weekly WtW participation requirement and it is determined that job search ([see Chapter 700, Flex Job Search](#)) is not a viable option, the participant is referred to assessment to determine the best concurrent work activity to fulfill the participation requirement, as described in [Chapter 800, Section 812.8](#).

### .26 Time Limits

A participant who is in an approvable SIP can go to school full-time for the entire time on aid. However, he/she must continue to meet all SIP requirements.

.261 The WtW core activities, [Section 912.32](#), requirements do not apply to SIP participation. SIP participants are not:

- (a) Required to participate 20 hours per week in core activities; and
- (b) Limited to 12 months of vocational education and training.

### .27 Supportive Services

Participants must be informed of the availability of supportive services which include child care, transportation, ancillary and work-related expense, and Specialized Supportive Services, such as Domestic Violence, Mental Health and Substance Abuse, which he/she might need to participate in the WtW activity. Additionally, supportive services must be provided to the participant in an unapprovable SIP until he/she finishes the current quarter or semester.

The GSW may deny or reduce supportive services based on the participant's receipt of financial aid only when the participant voluntarily agrees to use financial aid to pay for items which would generally be paid for with CalWORKs funds. The WTW 8, Student Financial Aid Statement Welfare-to-Work Supportive Services form must be used for this purpose.

### .28 Work Study

Work Study provides participants with paid work while pursuing an educational program. To be eligible for a work study assignment, participants must be enrolled in a post-secondary program that participates in a work study program. Work Study assignments are available both off and on campus. The

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Work Study assignment may be with a private business, a non-profit agency or a public agency.

Eligibility for a Work Study assignment is ultimately left to the discretion of the school and is not a guaranteed activity.

Work Study is a concurrent activity that must be paired with a [Self Initiated Program \(SIP\)](#), a [Vocational/Educational training \(VOC\)](#), or a [Job Skills Training \(JST\)](#) activity.

The participant's Work Study project will terminate when:

- .281 the school ends the Work Study assignment , or
- .282 the participant is no longer in school, or
- .283 the SIP,VOC or JST activity paired with the Work Study assignment ends and the participant will no longer be in school, or
- .284 the participant is no longer in school.

If any of these occur, the participant shall be referred to the next appropriate activity.

Work Study counts as a [core activity](#). For this reason, participants should be encouraged to participate in 20 hours of weekly work study hours when the student's schedule permits. Work Study hours are determined by the school and the student and are based on the Work Study award and the student's schedule.

All Work Study activity must be tracked on the GEARS system.

### .281 Work Study in Public Agencies Program

The Work Study in Public Agencies (WSPA) program is a special project designed to provide CalWORKs participants with a work opportunity at a public agency that is in line with the participant's field of study. WSPA is not available to other students unlike traditional work study.

Once the number of Work Study hours has been determined, the school shall assist the participant in selecting a work site and scheduling an interview.

After the interview, the participant shall meet with the GSW/CCM to sign the WTW plan and to open the Work Study component on GEARS.

After the GSW/CCM receives verification that Work Study employment has started, the employment is added on GEARS.

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### **.3 Welfare-to-Work Plan Changes**

After signing the WtW plan, the participant has three working days to consider and ask for changes to the terms of the agreement. The three-day period begins on the working day after the participant signs the plan and ends at the close of business of the third working day. After the three-day period, the plan is considered final.

When a change is approved, the participant is to initial the agreed upon change. Changes to the plan are noted on a new WTW 2 indicating "Amendment and Amendment Number" and the GSW must reference the changes in the "comments" section of the initial WTW 2. For changes that are denied, the GSW is to annotate the "comments" section of the WTW 2 with the date of the request, reason for denial and statement that the participant's legal rights were explained.

### **.4 Receipt of GN 6005**

Upon receiving the GN 6005, the GSW must review the form and compare the information with current information on file and on the GN 6004. If the information is conflicting, the GSW must contact the participant to clarify the information. Additionally, the GSW must take the following action when the GN 6005 indicates:

- .41 A participant in an approved SIP is not making satisfactory progress. The reason for the lack of progress must be established to determine if the participant will be permitted to remain in the SIP. Unless the participant agreed to continue only to the end of the current term, the participant can be permitted to continue in the SIP, if his/her progress is satisfactory at the end of the quarter/semester; if not, the participant is to be assigned to Job Search services.
- .42 A participant in an approved/denied SIP is not meeting the 32/35 hourly requirement per week; the participant must participate in a concurrent WtW activity.

### **.5 Progress/Participation Time Tracking**

A SIP participant's attendance, progress, work and weekly hours of participation must be tracked and documented at least quarterly or, at midpoint, if the program is for less than three months.

The GN 6070, Progress Report for Education, Training, Post-Employment Services and Work Experience Programs is the preferred form of documentation. It is mailed to the participant at the appropriate reporting intervals. For participants required to concurrently participate for a SIP and work activity, a separate GN 6070 is to be mailed for each provider. Standards for attendance and satisfactory progress are defined by the provider.

In circumstances where efforts to have the provider complete the GN 6070 are unsuccessful, the participant may obtain a letter from a counselor or instructor to



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document attendance, progress and weekly hours of participation. When this form of documentation is used, the letter is to be submitted on the service provider's letterhead and must bear the provider's stamp/seal and the signature of the person who authored the letter.

If the documentation is inconsistent, incomplete, inadequate or lacking authenticity, the participant must submit additional or collateral information/ documentation to resolve the issue.

The GSW must inform SIP participants of the consequences of failing to provide timely progress reports and/or refusal to provide documentation of attendance, progress and weekly hours of SIP participation without a good reason. ([See Chapters 1300](#))

A participant may be excused from participation when they request and are eligible for an exemption. ([See Chapters 400](#))

### **.6 Noncompliance**

The purpose of the noncompliance process is to identify participation problems, determine the cause such as: ([See Chapter 1300](#))

- .61 A SIP participant's failure to progress, participate in a concurrent activity or attend his/her program;
- .62 determining the cause of the problem;
- .63 resolving the problem;
- .64 seeking to restore the participant to compliance and/or participation as soon as possible; and/or,
- .65 determining a potential need for an exemption or Specialized Supportive Services need.

Participation problems may be reported by the participant, service provider or Community College CalWORKs' campus staff either via the GN 6070, progress report, a telephone call or other written communication.

### **.7 Interruption of SIP**

When participation in an approved SIP is interrupted due to a Good Cause reason ([See Chapter 1300](#)), participation in the same SIP may be resumed if the participant maintained good standing in the program while participating, and the program continues to meet the SIP approval criteria.

A participant may be excused from participation when he/she requests and is determined eligible for an exemption. ([See Chapter 400](#))

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### **.8 Completion/Termination of SIP**

- .81 When any of the following circumstances occur, the participant is to be referred to the next appropriate WtW activity:
  - .811 The SIP is completed.
  - .812 The participant stops participating or fails to meet participation requirements (attendance standards or satisfactory progress) without a good reason.
  - .813 The SIP was denied and/or the participant failed/refused to transfer to an approved SIP.

Whenever a participant stops participating in an activity, the activity is to be ended on GEARS and supportive services stopped until the issue is resolved. When the participant resumes participation, an evaluation of supportive services is required.

### **.9 Notification of Next GAIN Activity**

The GN 60102-a, GAIN Services Worker Appointment Letter is created to make an appointment with the GAIN participant prior to completion of her/his Self-Initiated Program (SIP) or post-assessment activities.

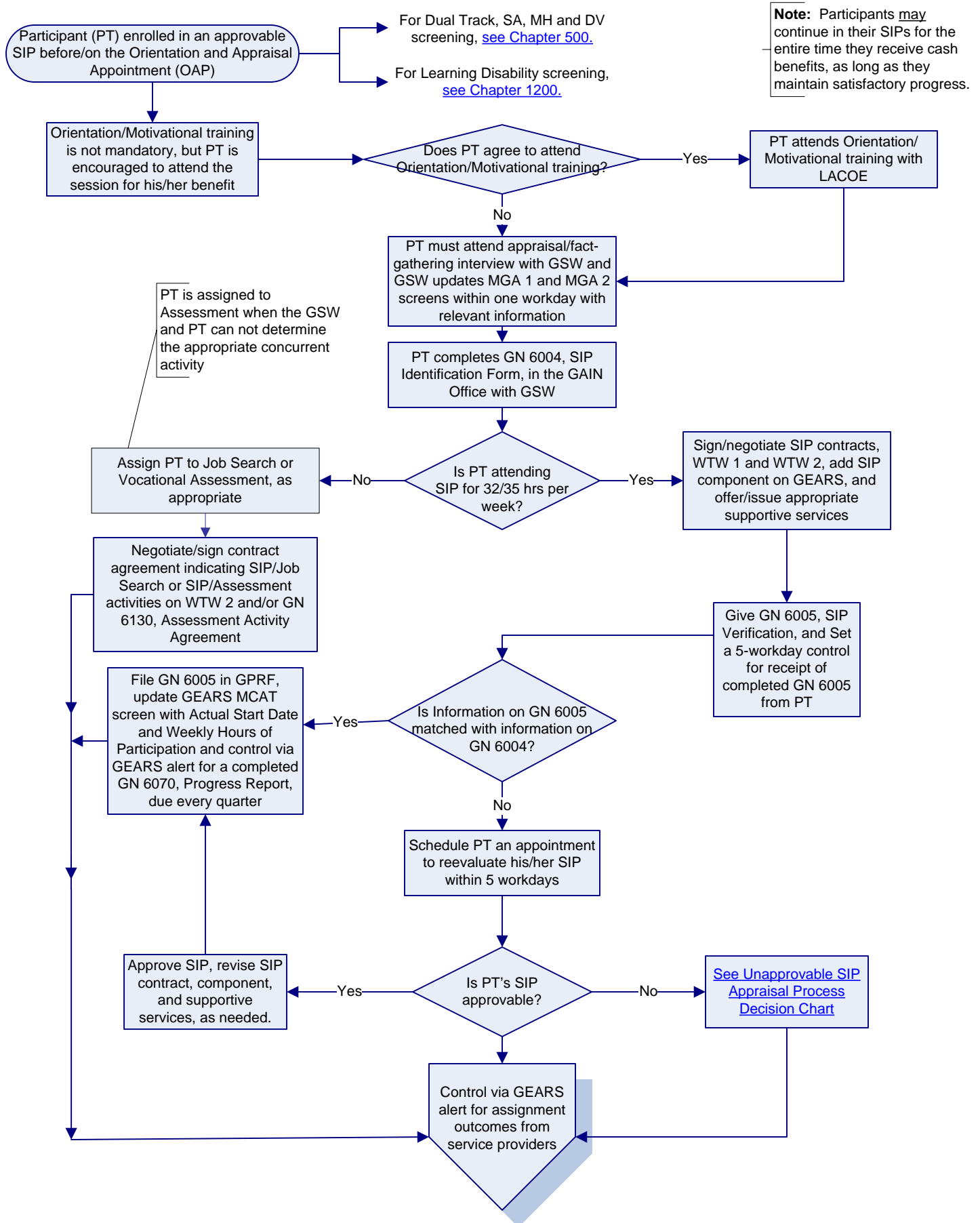
- .91 GEARS will automatically send the GN 60102-a, 30 calendar days prior to the component expected end date, making an appointment for the participant with the GAIN Services Worker (GSW) 15 days prior to the expected component end date. However, if necessary, the GSW may issue and send the GN 60102-a to the GAIN participant manually.

**Note:** Since the next GAIN activity assignment appointment will be made 15 days prior to the component expected end date, no compliance process needs to be initiated if the participant does not attend his/her appointment.

- .92 If the participant does not attend his/her appointment, the GSW will send another GN 60102-a to the GAIN participant making a next GAIN activity assignment appointment with him/her on the first work day following the component expected end date.
- .93 If the participant does not attend the appointment that was scheduled by the GSW, and the GSW has not received and approved an extension request for the GAIN activity, then a compliance process may be initiated. However, the GSW will try to contact the GAIN participant before taking action and initiating the compliance process.

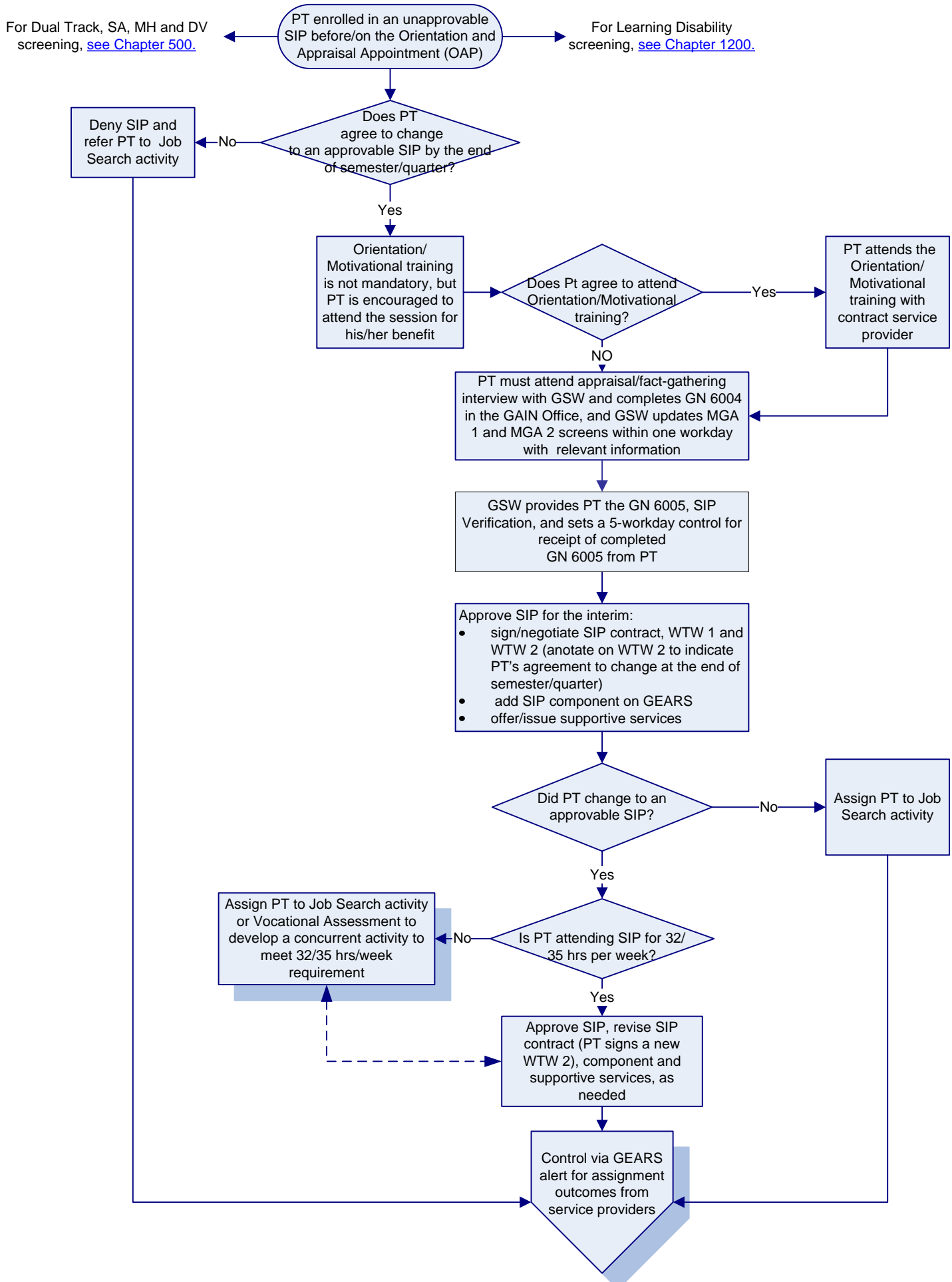
## 613 DECISION CHARTS

### 613.1 Approvable SIP Appraisal Decision Chart



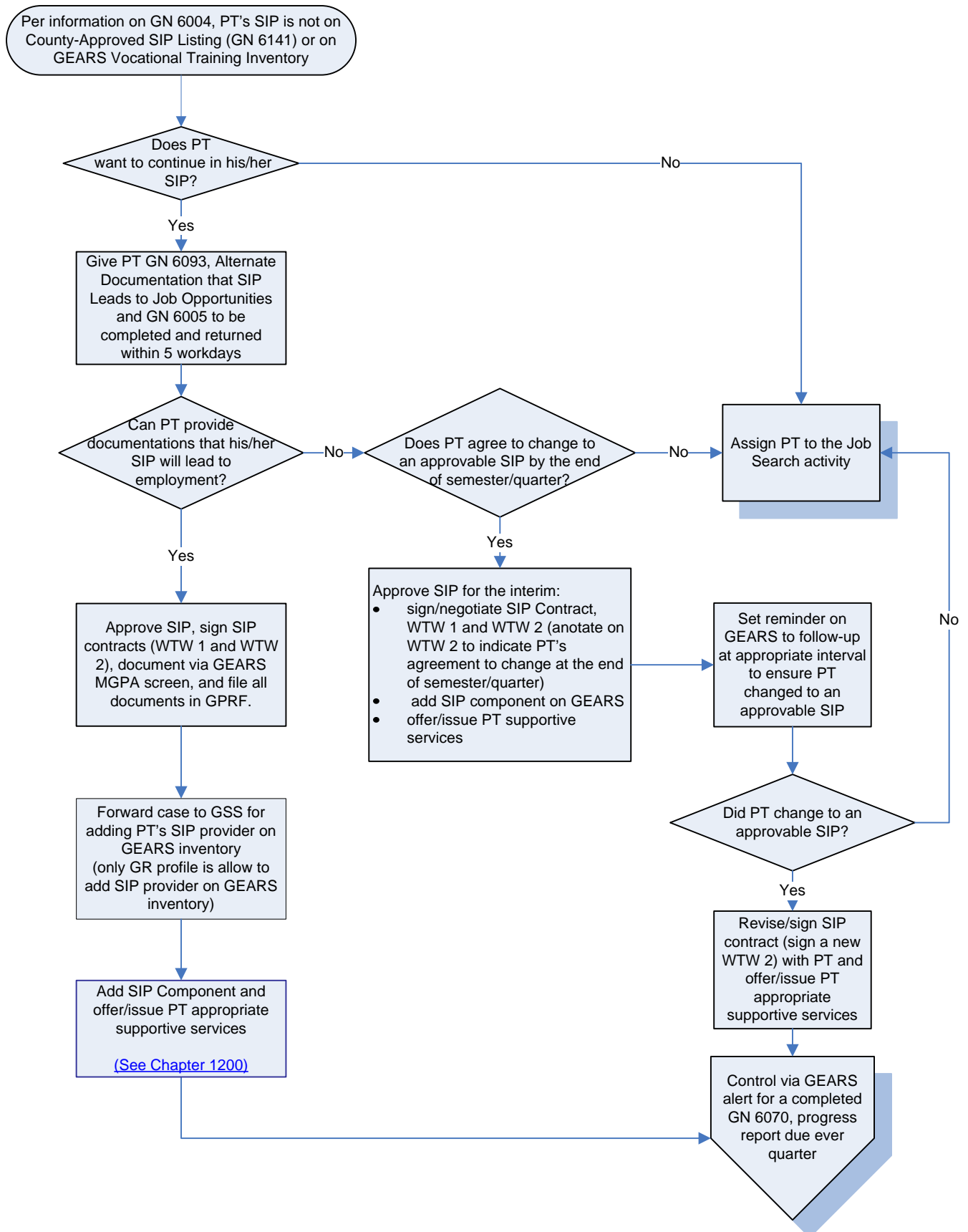
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### 613.2 Unapprovable SIP Appraisal Decision Chart



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### 613.3 Alternate Documentation that SIP Leads to Job Opportunities Decision Chart

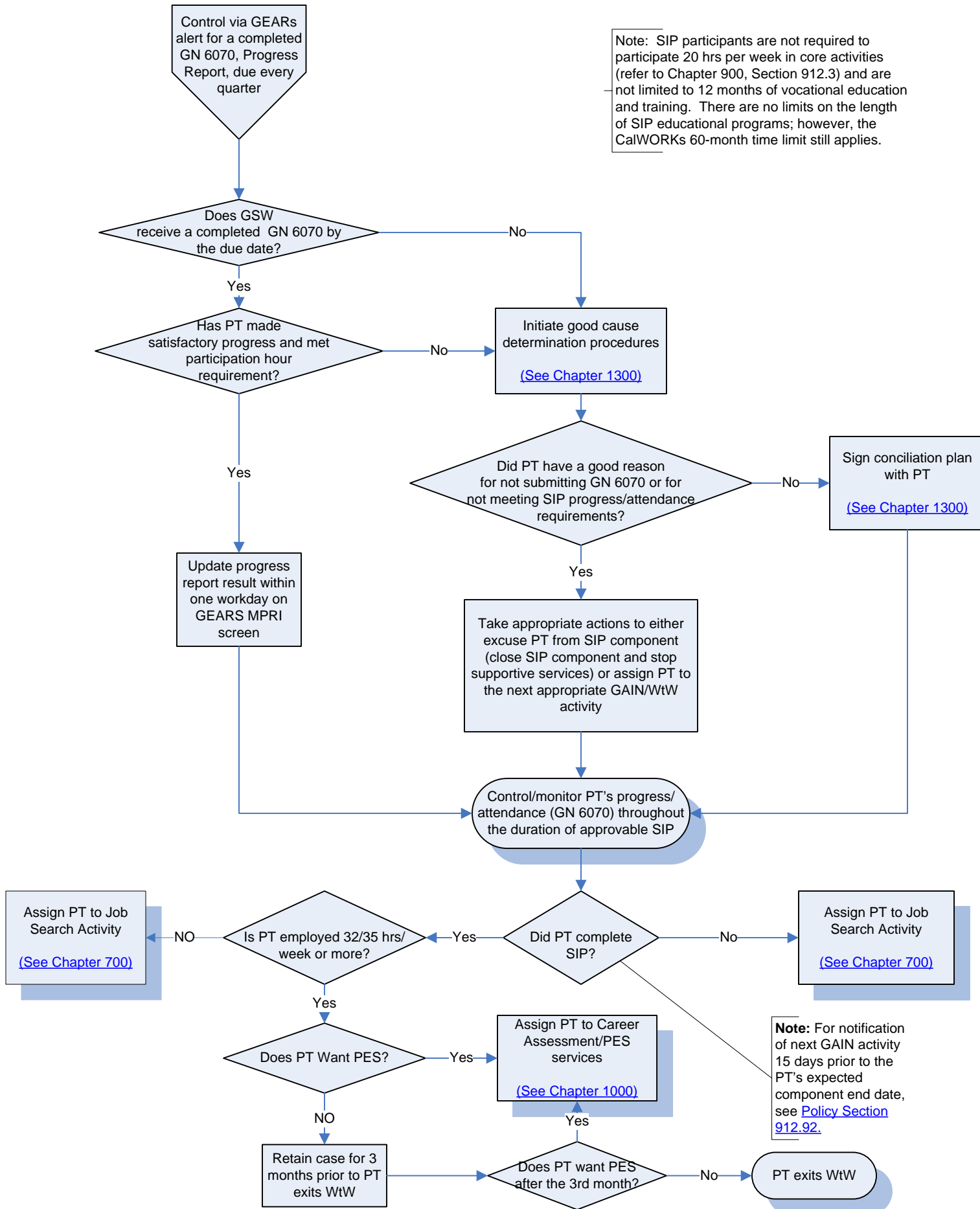


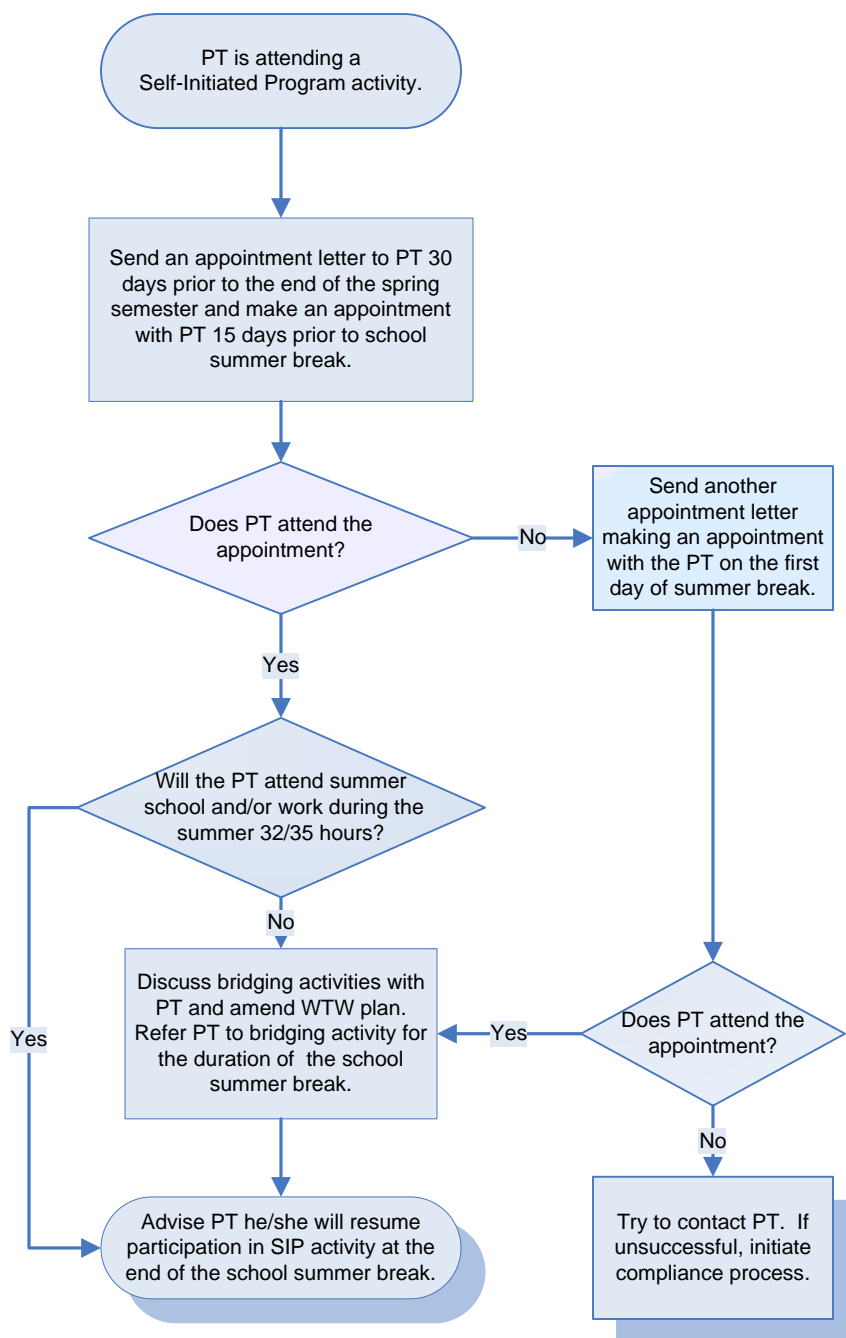
Note: SIP participants are not required to participate 20 hrs per week in core activities (refer to Chapter 900, Section 912.3) and are not limited to 12 months of vocational education and training. There are no limits on the length of SIP educational programs; however, the CalWORKs 60-month time limit still applies.

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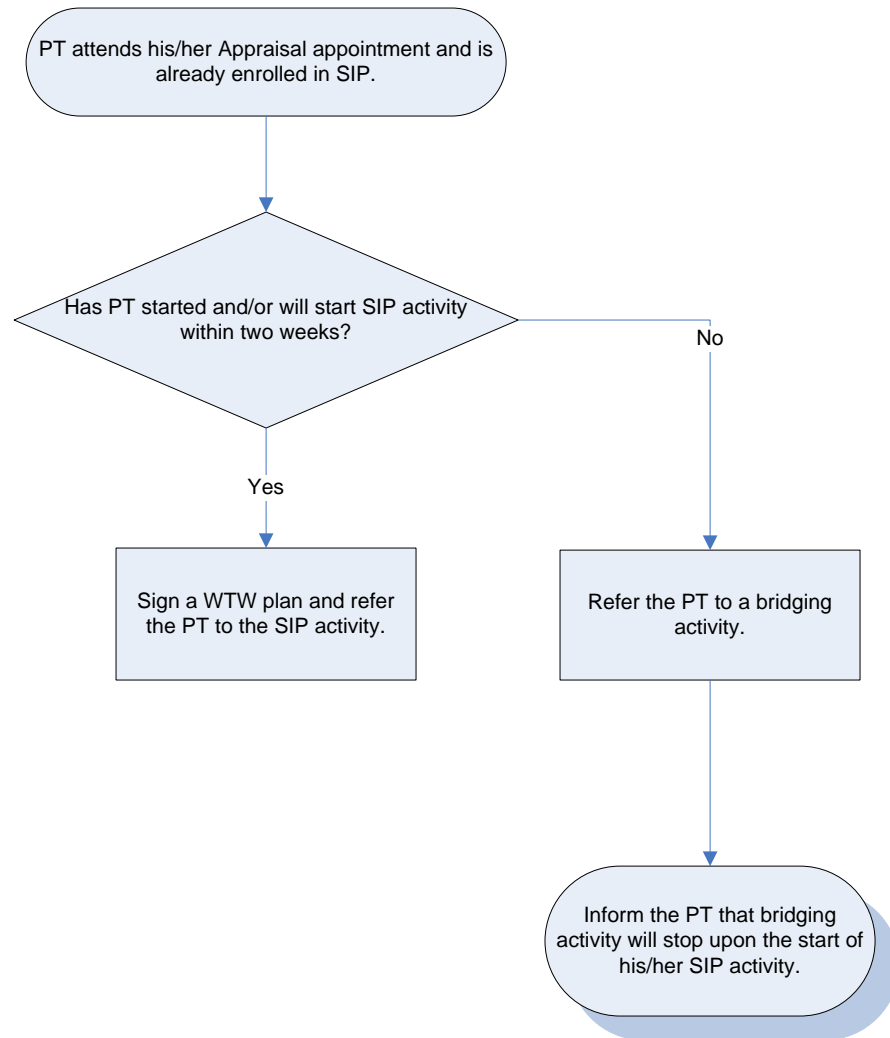
## 613.4 Progress and Participation Tracking Decision Chart

Note: SIP participants are not required to participate 20 hrs per week in core activities (refer to Chapter 900, Section 912.3) and are not limited to 12 months of vocational education and training. There are no limits on the length of SIP educational programs; however, the CalWORKs 60-month time limit still applies.



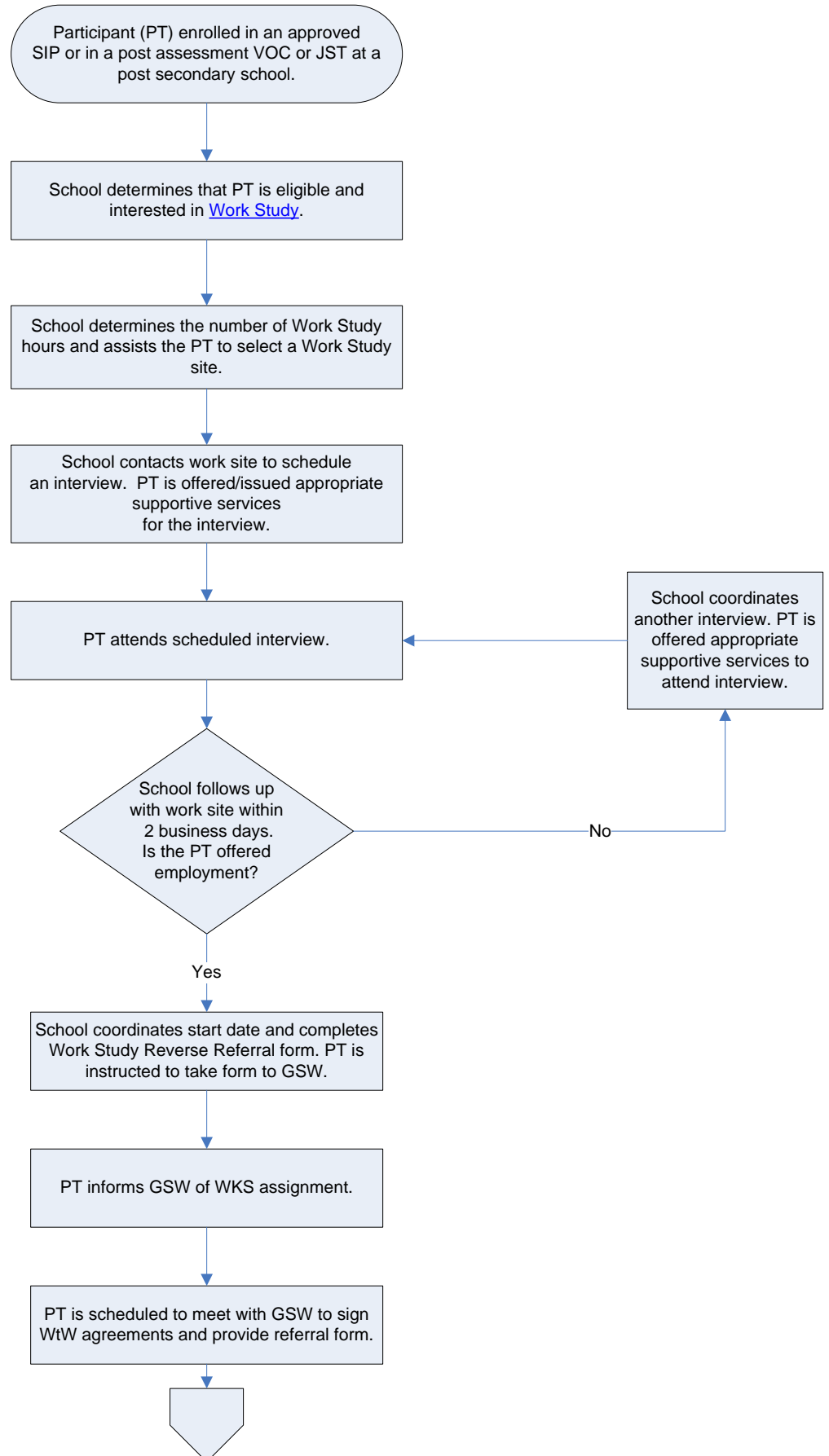
613.5 Referral to Bridging Activity During School Summer Break Decision Chart

613.6 Referral to Bridging Activity Decision Chart





## 613.7 Work Study Decision Chart



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## 613.7 Work Study Decision Chart (continued)

